

Double Act

The Reading Manager Who Helps Amateurs Wycombe—And The Wycombe Boss Who Aids Third Division Reading

was back to the good old days.

"Whenever we meet we always talk football and try to sort out each other's problems," says Brian. In fact it was one such talk which resulted in Jack being locked out of his hotel.

He was manager of Rotherham at the time, and they were due to play Manchester United in the Cup the following day at Old Trafford.

"We had only been sitting about talking about football," recalls Jack. "But by the time Brian came to drive me to the hotel we were staying at it was locked up.

"Unfortunately, John's playing career ended when he broke a leg during pre-season training before he had even kicked a ball in anger," said Jack.

The close friendship of Brian Lee and Jack Mansell doesn't end in football, however. They make a good doubles pair on the tennis courts, and are not often beaten. But they have no ambitions for Wimbledon. They are doing very nicely, thank you, in football's double act with Reading and Wycombe!

RICKY JAMES

If Reading had won promotion to the Second Division for the first time since 1930 last season—and they came very close to it—they probably would have owed a great deal to the boss of amateur club Wycombe Wanderers.

Likewise the amateurs of Wycombe are very grateful to the manager of Third Division Reading who played a vital part in helping them to end the season as runners-up to Isthmian League Champions Enfield—who also won the Amateur Cup.

This strange and perhaps complicated story all stems from a close friendship between the two managers. Reading boss Jack Mansell, caught up in the hectic life of professional football, and Brian Lee, Manager of Wycombe Wanderers from the more docile world of amateur football.

They met on a coaching course at Lilleshall in 1955. Brian Lee's playing career at Port Vale had been ended almost before it even started through a foot injury, and Jack Mansell broke into management after spells as a player, with Brighton, Cardiff and Portsmouth.

Brian took over at Wycombe in January, 1969, and when Jack took charge of Reading—a free-kick away from Wycombe—in April of that year, it

Reading Manager Jack Mansell (above) and his close friend Brian Lee (right), boss of Wycombe, often consult each other if they have a problem.

I had to struggle through a small window head-first.

"The funny thing about it was that it happened at about the same time that Tommy Docherty was reprimanding his Chelsea players for sneaking back into their hotels late at night. At least I had no-one who could tell me off!"

That long talk, however, almost paid dividends, for Rotherham held United to a goalless draw at Old Trafford and then lost the replay by the only goal, four minutes from the end of extra-time, at home.

"Our friendship suffered a temporary break last season when Wycombe defeated Reading in a charity match," says Brian.

But the Third Division club had a ready-made excuse on that occasion. The player that guested in goal for them was John Pratt of Wycombe, who later signed on for Reading.

